

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss drug trafficking as a regional problem and to describe counterdrug initiatives and assistance to Andean Ridge nations. Drug trafficking increasingly poses a significant threat to regional stability, strong democracies, and free market economies throughout our hemisphere. While Andean Ridge countries must lead the fight against drug trafficking, they need our commitment of financial, operational, and intelligence support. Today I will provide you an assessment of the narcotics threat and challenges facing the nations of the Andean Ridge Region. I will also describe current plans and support for counterdrug operations, and address long range plans and requirements.

REGIONAL THREAT

The danger of drug trafficking to the Andean Ridge nations is real, immediate, and growing. The illicit drug industry has become a corrosive force without precedent, relentlessly eroding the foundations of democracy in the region, corrupting public institutions, poisoning youth, ruining economies, and disrupting the social order. Colombia is key to the region's stability. Colombia's problems are not contained by her borders, and are spilling over into neighboring countries. Venezuela has deployed 10,000

troops along the Colombian border to prevent intrusions by Colombian insurgents. Peru and Ecuador also deploy forces along the Colombian border to deter the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), paramilitary forces, and drug traffickers from unwanted incursions. Ecuador's current economic plight makes it nearly impossible for the government to deploy sufficient military forces to prevent illegal border crossings. FARC and drug trafficker incursions recently prompted the Brazilian Army to reinforce military garrisons along its border with Colombia and spurred the government to continue development of the \$1.4 billion Amazon Surveillance System (SIVAM). FARC and paramilitary forces enter Panama with impunity to terrorize and extort Panamanian citizens, and to traffic in drugs and arms. To wage an effective, long-term counterdrug campaign, countries of the region must cooperate to develop a common strategy and coordinate their actions against drug traffickers. A collective regional response is required to provide effective border security and to expand and sustain the impressive counterdrug results achieved by Peru and Bolivia.

Assessment of the Andean Ridge Heroin and Cocaine Industry

Peru and Bolivia have made significant progress in reducing coca production, surpassing 1999 eradication goals. For 1999, Peru reduced illicit coca production by 27 percent, while Bolivia reduced production by 53 percent. Despite these significant reductions, a dramatic increase in Colombian production offsets progress in other nations and seriously impedes regional CD efforts.

Colombia is now the world's largest producer of cocaine, due in large part to the Colombian Government's limited control of territory in its outlying provinces. Drug traffickers took advantage of the minimal security force presence in these provinces to increase coca production in 1998 by 24 percent over the previous year. Production for 1999 increased by 20 percent

over 1998. Despite aerial spraying to eradicate more than 42,000 acres of coca in Colombia, cocaine production for 1999 is estimated to have been 520 metric tons, with a U.S. street value of \$6.2 billion.

The Center for Narcotics and Crime (CNC) reported that drug traffickers in 1999 used air, sea, and land routes to move an estimated 512 metric tons of mostly Colombian cocaine from the Source Zone. Multi-national CD efforts interdicted approximately 131 metric tons, but an estimated 381 metric tons evaded interdiction efforts and entered the Transit Zone, potentially destined for the U.S.

In addition to coca production, Colombia is a major source of opium poppy cultivation and heroin production. Two-thirds of the heroin seized in the United States comes from Colombia, which now ranks fourth among the world's heroin producers. Production for 1998 was estimated at six metric tons, with a U.S. street value of \$390 million. Although Colombia stepped up its eradication program last year, spraying approximately 8,000 acres of poppy cultivation, heroin production increased to an estimated eight metric tons in 1999 with a U.S. street value exceeding \$500 million.

Challenges

The difficulty of locating, tracking, and intercepting drug traffickers throughout the Andean Ridge is exacerbated by the proliferation of sophisticated Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs). These DTOs are smaller, more adaptable, and more mobile than traditional cartels, complicating intelligence collection efforts and making them more difficult to target.

Many DTOs have symbiotic links to the FARC, National Liberation Army (ELN), and paramilitary organizations. More than half of the FARC fronts and roughly one-fourth of ELN fronts receive support from, and provide protection to, DTOs. Drug money provides a major portion of the FARC's war chest and is the FARC's primary source for sustaining forces, conducting combat

operations, and purchasing weapons. Several Colombian paramilitary groups also protect and receive support from DTOs.

Current Plans and Support

Counterdrug (CD) Campaign Plan. U.S. Southern Command, as part of the Interagency team, has developed a three-phased regional CD Campaign Plan that supports the goals, objectives, and intent of Presidential Decision Directive (PDD)-14 and the National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS). The focus of Phase I is on assisting Partner Nations to improve their CD capabilities, and where required, develop new ones. This approach requires the U.S. to help organize, train, and where necessary, equip Partner Nations to conduct air, riverine, and ground CD operations against drug traffickers. Phase II will entail decisive regional operations to neutralize organizations involved in the illicit drug trade. During this Phase, Partner Nations will isolate drug producing areas from traditional markets and transit points and extend security force presence into production areas. Phase III will sustain successes achieved during the first two phases by preparing Partner Nation forces to adapt CD operations to the constantly changing tactics of drug traffickers. Aggressive interdiction efforts in the Transit Zone will be conducted during all three phases.

Counterdrug Supplemental Bill. The proposed counterdrug supplemental will assist Colombia in implementing its strategic plan for counterdrug operations. The supplemental is consistent with the overarching National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS), supports goals 4 and 5 of the Strategy, and will enable United States Southern Command to more effectively execute its

Counterdrug Campaign Plan. Colombia and its Andean Ridge neighbors fully appreciate the regional problems that are caused by the illegal drug industry, and have demonstrated the willingness to pursue solutions at the regional level. Success in these efforts will require continued commitment from the U.S. The United States has provided initial training, limited infrastructure support, technological support, and equipment to foster commitment and to improve Partner Nation capabilities to fight drug trafficking within their borders and throughout the region. Ninety of our 119 CD training support deployments for Fiscal Year 2000 are scheduled for Andean Ridge countries. In addition, seven of our nineteen Tactical Analysis Teams (TATs) are located in the five Andean Ridge countries, and more than 100 Joint Planning and Assistance Teams (JPATs) deploy to the region annually, providing CD training and assessments for host nation security forces. We also provide support for Andean Ridge ground, air, and riverine programs. If approved, supplemental funding will enable us to aggressively pursue existing programs that have already demonstrated their merit, and initiate new ones such as the Colombia Counternarcotics (CN) Brigade, which can be decisive as we seek a comprehensive solution to the drug challenge.

Support to Ground Programs. We have helped the Colombian Army (COLAR) organize, train, and equip their first Counternarcotics Battalion (CN BN), which became operational December 15, 1999. Manned by more than 900 professional soldiers and based at the Joint Task Force (JTF)-South headquarters in Tres Esquinas, the CN BN is comprised of a headquarters company and three maneuver companies. The Battalion completed an extensive three-phase training program conducted by U.S. Special Forces at a cost of \$3.9 million and received \$3.5 million in individual and unit equipment, and medical supplies to enable stand-alone operations. The CN BN is designed to conduct ground and airmobile CD operations in coordination with the Colombian National Police (CNP). The CN BNs will provide area security to the CNP as the police conduct

eradication and drug law enforcement operations deep in the coca producing regions of Putumayo and Caqueta. Colombian armed forces and police units will receive integrated intelligence support from the Colombia Joint Intelligence Center (COJIC). To provide urgently needed tactical mobility, the Battalion has received 18 refurbished UH-1N helicopters (and accompanying spare parts), which were provided by the Department of State (DOS). Based at Tolemeida and Florencia, these helicopters are crewed by 25 contract pilots and 14 Colombian copilots trained in the United States. Contract pilots will be phased out as additional Colombian pilots complete their training. DOS is also providing follow-on support equipment (armament and portable hangars), and has budgeted \$2.1 million of monthly Operations and Maintenance funds to sustain this crucial capability. The Colombian Joint Intelligence Center became operational on December 22, 1999, and is currently supporting national police, military, and JTF-South CD operations. It produces real-time targeting information, terrain and weather analysis, force protection vulnerability assessments, and intelligence estimates. The United States Government (USG) provided \$4.9 million for construction of the COJIC facility, installation of networked computers and communications equipment, base infrastructure upgrades, and defrayal of operating expenses through mid-June 2000. Three U.S. subject matter experts are deployed to the COJIC through June 2000 to observe and assist COLAR and Colombian National Police intelligence specialists manning the facility. We are also improving Tres Esquinas, where Joint Task Force-South, the COJIC, and the CN BN are colocated. Thus far, we have spent more than \$600,000 on force protection improvements alone. Other upgrades are underway, including extension of the existing aircraft runway and construction of an aircraft parking ramp. Planning is ongoing to establish, train, and equip two additional CN Battalions and a COLAR CN Brigade headquarters during 2000. The second CN Battalion will begin training this month, followed several months later by the third Battalion, which will complete its training in December

2000. While the basic organization of the second and third Battalions will closely parallel the first, some organizational refinements will be made. Improvements will include the inception of a reinstruction company, to provide a reservoir of trained replacement forces, and the consolidation of support elements (reconnaissance, medical, mortars), into a Support Battalion. Soldiers assigned to all of the new Battalions will be vetted to eliminate human rights abusers.

Support to Interdiction Programs. We continue to conduct cooperative air interdiction efforts with Peru and Colombia and are using the security assistance program to upgrade the capabilities of A-37, Tucano, and C-26 aircraft. We have teamed with the Interagency to develop a CD Air Interdiction Plan to enhance current Government of Colombia (GOC) capabilities. This plan will maximize Colombian operational effectiveness focusing phased air interdiction operations against drug smuggling aircraft in southern and eastern Colombia. Operations will integrate Relocatable Over-the-Horizon Radar (ROTHR), U.S. tracker and detection aircraft, and Colombian air force and national police aircraft. Training began in February 2000 and will be followed by several months of focused air interdiction operations. The proposed supplemental funds air-to-air radar and an upgraded communications package for two of the Colombian Air Force's (COLAF) C-26 Merlin aircraft. These modified aircraft will enable the COLAF to track and intercept aircraft moving cocaine from inland laboratories to the Colombian coasts for transshipment to the United States. The supplemental also: (1) improves COLAF tactical surveillance and intelligence capabilities by providing Forward-Looking Infrared Radar (FLIR) for low-altitude, long-duration reconnaissance aircraft; (2) improves collection from ground-based radars (GBR) by funding upgrades to current GBR's and fielding an additional GBR at Tres Esquinas; and (3) corrects operational and safety deficiencies at the Forward Operating Location (FOL) in Manta,

Ecuador to allow sustained operations by U.S. Navy, Air Force, and Customs aircraft in the deep Source Zone and the Eastern Pacific. The proposed supplemental will go a long way toward correcting one of Colombia's longest standing and most crucial operational deficiencies -- inadequate tactical mobility. As previously mentioned, 18 UH-1N helicopters have already been delivered to Colombia to provide air mobility for the inaugural CN Battalion. These aircraft were provided through a coordinated effort by the Department of State and Department of Defense. If the supplemental is approved, 15 additional UH-1N's will be upgraded, brought to standardized configuration and delivered to Colombia to support expanded mobility needs as the CN Battalion grows to Brigade strength. Ultimately, these 33 UH-1N helicopters will be replaced by 30 UH-60 Blackhawks and additional H-60's that will be purchased by Colombia using its own funds. The selection of the UH-60 as the standard helicopter for Colombia's armed forces was based on its range, payload, survivability, versatility, service ceiling, and a variety of other factors. Other options including non-U.S. aircraft were considered; however, we support the Colombian decision and believe that important requirements such as training, maintenance, facilities, and contractor support will be simplified by the Blackhawk selection.

Support to Riverine Programs. In the infrastructure-poor regions of Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia where the drug industry thrives, road networks are sparse to non-existent. The rivers that feed the Amazon Basin have become the highways that support the drug trade. To assist partner nations in their efforts to interdict drug trafficking on the rivers, we have instituted aggressive programs to train, equip and effectively employ riverine forces in Colombia and Peru. Colombia has long recognized the importance of its rivers to those who ply the drug trade. To provide better coverage of the rivers and to achieve greater operational efficiency,

Colombia comprehensively reorganized its riverine forces during 1999. A fluvial brigade has been created with five organic battalions. In the past, riverine battalions were assigned to contiguous operating areas. Under the new concept, each battalion is assigned responsibility for two or more specific rivers. We subscribe fully to this approach, predict an upsurge in operational efficiency, and have already seen improved results from its implementation. The basic operating element within the Colombian riverine structure is the riverine combat element (RCE). With U.S. assistance, the Colombian Navy and Marine Corps have now fielded 25 RCEs against a projected requirement of 45. Simultaneously, seven support bases required for the support and sustainment of riverine forces have either been built or refurbished. With current funding, during FY 2000 we will help Colombia achieve its objective riverine force structure by procuring eight patrol boats, spare parts, night vision and radio-navigation equipment. While the Colombian riverine program is relatively mature, Peru's is in its formative stage. With U.S. assistance, the Peruvians have established the Joint Peru Riverine Training Center near Iquitos in the Amazon region. With our help, Peru is making steady progress. During the past year four of 12 planned Riverine Interdiction Units (RIU) have been fielded and pressed into service. With currently approved funding we will assist Peru to expand its riverine capabilities by providing them twelve 25-foot patrol boats, six 40-foot patrol craft, spare parts, night vision devices and essential items of individual equipment. In tandem with training and provisioning initiatives, we are working closely with Colombia and Peru to better and more fully integrate riverine forces into their national interdiction programs.

**LONG RANGE PLANS AND REQUIREMENTS TO ASSIST THE ANDEAN RIDGE COUNTRIES WITH
THEIR COUNTERDRUG EFFORTS**

Personal Assessment

We must sustain and broaden our CN initiatives with Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama, and Bolivia. U.S. efforts are currently focused on training counterdrug forces and conducting detection and monitoring operations against the production and transportation of illicit drugs in these nations. Continued support of these efforts is crucial to long-term success in the region. The first step in achieving regional stability for the Andean Ridge requires the development of an integrated Source Zone strategy. This strategy must consider the economic and social impact of illicit drug trafficking and effectively coordinate the counterdrug efforts of each Partner Nation. Two national policy directives guide the way ahead: Presidential Decision Directive-14 and goals four and five of the National Drug Control Strategy. Current policy guidance clearly identifies the importance of effective interdiction and the requirement to break the source of supply of drugs. The NDCS establishes two measurable goals for U.S. Southern Command and the Interagency: a 10 percent reduction in the shipment of illegal drugs through the Transit Zone and a 15 percent reduction in flow from the Source Zone by 2002; and a 20 percent reduction through the Transit Zone and 30 percent reduction from the Source Zone by 2007. Achievement of these goals will require strong commitment on the parts of the nations of the Andean Ridge, but they will not succeed on their own. It will fall to the United States to provide the leadership, technical assistance, training and materiel support that is needed to fill the gaps in national capabilities.

Forward Operating Locations (FOLs)

To achieve the objectives of our Counterdrug (CD) Campaign Plan, we must better position our assets to conduct sustained CD operations throughout the Source and Transit Zones. FOLs provide us the required operational reach to conduct these operations. Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions from the FOLs will enhance the effectiveness of U.S.

Detection, Monitoring, and Tracking (DM&T) operations and improve our support for Partner Nation interdiction operations. The FOL in Manta, Ecuador is my number one priority. Manta is critical for conducting deep Source Zone air coverage with Airborne Early Warning aircraft, and it is the only FOL that enables us to achieve full coverage of Peru, Colombia, and the drug producing areas of Bolivia. On November 15, 1999, we concluded a 10-year access agreement with the Government of Ecuador. This agreement addresses congressional concerns and should clear the way for funding the necessary operational improvements to allow unconstrained DM&T operations with all types of aircraft used in CD operations. The design and engineering plan for airfield improvements to satisfy our own mandated safety requirements were completed last month. Construction will commence just as soon as funding becomes available. The FOLs at Aruba and Curacao, funded in the Fiscal Year 2001 budget request, are required for effective, rapid response DM&T operations in the northern Source Zone, which includes the Guajira Peninsula of Colombia and the Venezuelan border region, as well as a large part of the Transit Zone. The formal 10-year access agreement with the Kingdom of the Netherlands was signed on March 2, 2000. Having reached long-term accords on Aruba and Curacao, one of our remaining challenges is to negotiate an FOL in Central America. This FOL would provide air coverage in the Eastern Pacific and Central America to keep pressure on the Transit Zone as we build CD capability in the Source Zone. U.S. Government representatives are currently negotiating a site with the Government of El Salvador for the CENTAM FOL.

Required Intelligence Support to Assist Regional CD Operations

The success of future regional CD operations will be contingent upon timely, accurate, predictive, and actionable intelligence. Significant deficiencies exist in Source Zone Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR). These shortfalls impede the gathering of timely and

actionable tactical intelligence to counter increasingly diversified and mobile drug trafficking operations. ISR shortfalls inhibit our ability to collect essential information on the capabilities, intentions, and activities of drug traffickers, and complicate our force protection efforts.

We need to expand our current collection capabilities and provide additional intelligence to Partner Nations and U.S. military forces and to law enforcement agencies conducting CD operations. The proposed supplemental funding for U.S. military airborne intelligence resources will enable U.S. Southern Command to collect additional critical intelligence on drug smuggling activities in the Source and Transit Zones. Increased sharing of that intelligence, closer cooperation with the Interagency, and better training of Partner Nation personnel will significantly enhance the effectiveness of CD operations throughout the Andean Ridge.

Future Efforts to Adapt to the Changing Drug Threat

Success in the CD effort also requires Partner Nation cooperation, "will to succeed", and enhanced counterdrug capabilities. The nations of the region have demonstrated commitment and resolve to attack illicit drug trade in their respective countries. We must maintain and expand our cooperative efforts within the interagency and with the Partner Nations to build, nurture, and sustain effective regional CD capabilities. A focused, well-coordinated Interagency effort will provide required levels of support to individual Partner Nations and complement our regional effort to plan and execute counterdrug operations. To this end, U.S. Southern Command continues to host planning conferences and bilateral meetings that enhance regional cooperation. A recently completed Aerospace Conference brought together the region's Air Force Commanders to discuss initiatives for improving regional air interdiction capabilities. Bilateral meetings between Ecuador and Colombia have also improved counterdrug coordination along their shared

borders. Additionally, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), in conjunction with U.S. Southern Command and with the complete cooperation of Colombian civilian and military leadership, has contracted with MPRI of Alexandria, Virginia to assist the Colombian military in assessing the baseline equipment, training and infrastructure, logistics, communications, and other areas that are required for a more relevant and effective Colombian military. Colombia's military leadership will begin implementation of MPRI recommendations later this year.

CONCLUSION

I have now served at U.S. Southern Command for 30 months. Shortly after assuming command and making my initial assessment of security and stability conditions in the region, I stated that I considered Colombia to be the most threatened nation in the AOR. Today, two and half years later, I stand behind that assessment. However, I am encouraged by what I see in Colombia. Served by a first class civilian and military leadership team, Colombia demonstrates a level of national organization and commitment that was not present two years ago. To be sure, the recently reported upsurge in coca cultivation and production provides cause for concern, but concern is partially offset by improved performance by Colombia's security forces during tactical engagements with the FARC, ELN, and others who are aiding and abetting narcotraffickers. Cooperation between the armed forces and national police have improved, new levels of competence in air-ground coordination have been demonstrated, intelligence sharing is on the upswing, an aggressive program is underway to restructure the armed forces, the armed forces and national police are poised to reassert control over the southern and eastern portions of the country, and Plan Colombia provides a comprehensive national strategy designed to defeat the narcotraffickers and correct the ills they have visited on Colombia's society. On average, I visit Colombia once every

six weeks. I am convinced that the second most populous nation in South America with the longest and strongest democratic traditions is turning the corner. With our help Colombia will succeed.

In recent months I have become increasingly concerned about Colombia's neighbors. The adverse social, economic and political conditions, spawned wholly or in part by drug trafficking and the other transnational threats that it breeds, are weakening the fabric of democracy in other nations in the region. While we assist Colombia in making important strides to reassert its sovereignty over its territory and to curb growing cultivation, we should also take appropriate steps to preserve the noteworthy successes achieved by Peru and Bolivia, and be sensitive to emerging needs in the bordering countries of Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela and Brazil. This is truly a regional problem - as such we must pursue a regional solution.

Thanks to the hard work of this Committee we are edging closer to the solution to a problem that the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy recently stated claims as many as 52,000 U.S. lives each year. If that grim calculation is correct, the annual loss of lives to drugs approximates our total losses in Vietnam - our nation's longest war. I can assure you of the commitment and conviction of every man and woman at United States Southern Command to succeed in this struggle. We know what to do and how to do it; we simply need the means to put our strategy and plans into motion. The supplemental that you are now considering will do just that. I urge your support.